



# **GREENSBORO URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

## **TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**August 23, 2006**

**2:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC**

**Blue Room**

**(County Commissioner's Briefing Room)**

**Old Guilford County Courthouse**

### **TAC MEMBERS PRESENT**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Sandy Carmany           | TAC Chair                              |
| Jim Westmoreland        | TCC Chair                              |
| Doug Galyon             | NCDOT                                  |
| Keith Holliday          | Mayor, City of Greensboro              |
| Kirk Perkins            | Guilford County Board of Commissioners |
| T. Dianne Bellamy-Small | Greensboro City Council                |

### **ATTENDANCE**

|                |            |                |                         |
|----------------|------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Tyler Meyer    | GDOT / MPO | Peggy Holland  | GDOT/ MPO               |
| Craig McKinney | GDOT / MPO | Lydia McIntyre | GDOT / MPO              |
| Peter Ohlms    | GDOT / MPO | John McLendon  | Bicycling In Greensboro |
| Brent McKinney | PART       | John Hunsinger | NCDOT                   |

**Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 2:10 pm.**

### **Action Items**

#### **1. Approve Minutes of July 26, 2006**

Keith Holliday moved for approval of the minutes. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the July 26, 2006 meeting.

## **2. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns**

None

## **3. Citizen Comments**

John McLendon, on behalf of Bicycling in Greensboro, Inc. (BIG), shared comments. BIG is a non-profit organization formed a year ago with the purpose of working with others to transform Greensboro into a bicycle-friendly community. The organization has been very pleased with the bicycle and pedestrian plan process and has tried to encourage others to participate. McLendon noted the group has very good communication with City staff and is excited to see the progress taking place on Spring Garden St. and Florida Street for implementing the bicycle lanes. McLendon voiced concern about the confusion between the bike lanes and parking lanes, further encouraging bicyclists to wear helmets, and the need for education. The organization is planning a riding event (BIG Salute to Bike Lanes) on September 23<sup>rd</sup> to raise awareness and educate the public about bicycling safely. The event will start at the Lindley Recreation Center at 10:30 am and follow the bike lane along Spring Garden downtown. Sandy Carmany noted council members have received e-mails about the Council passing a mandatory helmet requirement. McLendon hopes educational awareness would address the need to wear helmets. Members of the TAC commented on the importance of educating both cyclists and drivers and possibly adding additional bike signage.

## **Business / Potential Action Items**

### **1. GTA Update**

Jim Westmoreland noted the need to table the agenda item until next month's meeting. The item was tabled as a result of Libby James being out of the office due to health reasons. Westmoreland thanked everyone for their thoughts and prayers for James' recovery. On behalf of GTA, Westmoreland advised that the HEAT service kick-off was a success with various partners attending the celebration. UNCG has inquired about adding staff and faculty to the service currently being offered to the students. GTA still hopes that N.C. A&T will also join in the partnership to provide the service for free to their students. Ridership numbers for the new service will be provided at the next meeting. Ridership for the new service was slow the first week of school; however the ridership picked up the second week once classes had begun. The UNCG shuttle route, which offers service to campus along Walker Avenue and Spring Garden Street, was doing very well. GTA is also continuing towards implementing 30-minute service starting in January as well as the new South Town Connector. Westmoreland noted GTA continues to address concerns regarding the SCAT service. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small noted the importance of improving bus stops to encourage riders and maintenance of existing stops. Westmoreland responded that the Mobility Greensboro study did make that recommendation and it is on the radar screen to be addressed. Bellamy-Small also recommended that the HEAT service be highlighted during the League of Municipalities Conference.

### **2. BiPed Plan Update**

Tyler Meyer advised of the status of the MPO Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenways Plan, which has taken a year to develop. Staff is currently preparing a final draft document for public review and a condensed thirty-page summary document. Meyer noted the rising interest and needs for pedestrians and bicycles in the City. Developing the elements of the plan has been a long-term project and has had more interest in the community in the last ten years. The 2000 Bond & 2003 Walkability Policy set the stage for pedestrian and

bicycle improvements. The 2030 LRTP set the basic vision for the bicycle, pedestrian, and greenway plans. In addition, Guilford County has been doing greenway planning, which allowed for a greenway system that will be more closely coordinated with the bicycle and pedestrian system.

There has also been an increase in the public health community interest in the past few years. This interest was key in developing the plan, with a portion of the funding coming from the Moses Cone Foundation. The Foundation supplied the grant through Action Greensboro to fund the greenways portion of the plan, particularly in the City. The primary financial supporters of the plan were the MPO and the Moses Cone Foundation. Other groups instrumental in the development and implementation of the plan include NCDOT, Guilford County, MPO local towns, and Parks and Recreation Department. Meyer reviewed the process for developing the draft plan, which included technical evaluation and substantial public involvement.

The technical evaluation looked at current conditions, which included demographics, destination points, land use, and the systems currently in place. The development of the plan also included an online survey, which allowed for staff to get a sense of the perception of the current system. In addition, the survey results from UNCG on greenways were taken into account.

Bicycle recommendations were developed by looking at current conditions and future needs for connections. A bicycle level of service, which is an assessment of current conditions, included collecting data on roadway width, traffic volumes, percent of trucks, and roadway grade. The assessment allowed for staff to look at deficiencies in bicycle facilities and future opportunities for improvements.

Nine open house workshops were held throughout the process. In addition, focus groups were held at each of the towns and with special groups, such as the disabled. The public meetings were very successful with getting a substantial amount of input from the public.

Improvements included bicycle lanes, edgelines (to accommodate intermittent parking as on Florida Street), shoulders (primarily recommended in the county to provide extra width), and shared roadways. Some shared roadways will be a part of a signed bicycle route system which will replace old routes such as the Battleground Loop. The signed route system will be more functional and hopefully provide a more stable ride and will be accompanied by a map. Recommendations will be implemented with resurfacing or high-level corridor improvements. Bicycle improvements in the County will need to be coordinated with NCDOT. Meyer thanked NCDOT for including additional shoulder during their resurfacing project.

Next steps include taking input from the system planning phase to a more detailed implementation process. The Plan will be helpful in this step, as it prioritized the recommendations.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small noted the need for maintaining existing sidewalks and is going to encourage citizens to call in the sidewalk repair needs. Westmoreland responded that the staff is currently developing a list of comprehensive projects and will be sharing it with the Council in the next couple of months. Westmoreland noted that sidewalk repair is now performed by Field Operations. TAC members requested a map showing sidewalk priorities by Council District.

Pedestrian recommendations involved improvements for the small Towns and the City. Town-level recommendations will include sharing them with the Town officials; it will be up to them to implement. The City already has sidewalk projects underway. The recommendations will allow the City to look at long-term improvements and prioritize them. Factors considered in prioritizing will include transit

routes, filling in gaps on thoroughfares that connect residential areas to commercial areas, as well as proximity to schools.

The greenways recommendations include a more comprehensive plan which has an extensive network reaching more people. There is a substantial amount of greenway construction recommended, including off-road trails and shared use trails. The greenway map gives you a vision for long-term connections.

Overall, the Plan gives a framework or guide for implementing bicycle, pedestrian, and greenway facilities, in a coordinated effort with NCDOT, local governments, and staff. The Plan also includes policy recommendations for enforcement and maintenance strategies.

The implementation process is broken down into series of time frames (short-term, mid-term, and long-term) for each of the plan's elements. The bicycle recommendations include immediate opportunities to implement them with roadway resurfacing and projects on priority corridors. In addition, the plan also makes recommendations on funding.

Meyer advised of the next steps for the public review process. Staff is currently working on completing the final draft document. The document will be distributed to various sites and posted on the MPO Web site. MPO staff expects to bring the plan before the TAC on October 11<sup>th</sup> for adoption, and a presentation will be made to the City Council for possible adoption. A public meeting is planned to be held during the month of September. Holliday and Bellamy-Small emphasized the need to get the word out about the Plan. Suggested methods include using variable message signs and Channel 8. The plan will be forwarded to the local governments for consideration, but it will be up to them to consider it formally.

Jim Westmoreland thanked everyone for their hard work in developing the plan. Westmoreland further stated that the plan will not be implemented tomorrow, but lays out a vision for the future. In addition, Westmoreland thanked NCDOT for stepping up to the plate with implementing bicycle improvements, particularly on Church Street. Keith Holliday suggested contacting Joe Turner, District Court Head Judge, to do a workshop with traffic court judges regarding changes as result of the BiPed Plan. Bellamy-Small also recommended talking to Neighborhood Congress about walking and the health benefits.

Meyer also thanked everyone for participating in developing the plan.

In reference to some of the more minor service implementation issues that had been raised in the discussion, Doug Galyon offered that if needed the City Council should set up a transportation subcommittee of the City Council to address such items in detail.

### **3. Proposed Thoroughfare Plan Amendment**

Lydia McIntyre advised of the proposed thoroughfare plan amendment. Staff had previously briefed the committee on the feasibility study for the Youngs Mill and Florida Street extensions. Recommendations from the completion of the study have prompted the proposed amendments. The proposed amendment includes six changes. The first two changes include the removal of the Florida Street extension and Franklin Boulevard extension. The Franklin Boulevard extension is proposed for deletion as a result of it impacting a site slated for a future farm pavilion on N.C. A&T's farm. Currently the Florida Street extension begins at E. Lee Street and extends on new location over to McConnell Road and terminates at Clapps Farm Road. MPO staff worked closely with N.C. A&T to develop an alignment to lessen the impact to the farm. This coordination resulted in the third change which proposes to route the extension on new location

around the outskirts of N.C. A&T property and tying into existing McConnell Road. As a result of the extension being routed along McConnell Road, the fourth proposed change is to reclassify McConnell from a minor thoroughfare to a major thoroughfare from the new extension to I-40 / Business 85. The route would continue northwards on Clapp Farms Road, which would result in the fifth change to add it to the Thoroughfare Plan as a major thoroughfare. The sixth proposed change would further extend Holts Chapel Road from the Youngs Mill extension northward to US 70. This amendment resulted from discussions with the Mixed Use Corporate Park Committee. In addition, Naco Road, which is on the Collector Street Plan, is proposed to be extended eastward and then southward, crossing Clapps Farm Road and tying into McConnell Road. Tyler Meyer noted that the proposed amendment to the Florida Street extension would have fewer impacts to the existing environment and be easier to implement.

The amendment package shows a public review date starting August 24<sup>th</sup>, however, the document will go out for public review with the BiPed Plan in early September. The package will be presented for MPO approval at the October 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Westmoreland also noted that hopefully the MPO staff can continue to work with N.C. A&T to work out a better alignment for the Florida Street extension to support future development.

#### **4. Battleground Corridor Study Update**

Lydia McIntyre presented the update for the Battleground Corridor Study. McIntyre described the project as evaluating Battleground Avenue between Fernwood Drive and Pembroke / Green Valley Road. This is phase I of the study, which began in 2005. Jim Westmoreland noted the alternatives were done at a 50,000-foot level and have not been reviewed by the public yet. The alternatives represent a preliminary effort to accommodate future traffic as well as the trail. The study had two goals: reconfiguring the intersection where Lawndale, Battleground Avenue, and Westover Terrace come together and safely routing the Battleground Rail Trail through the corridor. Nine alternatives were developed while working with an internal stakeholder committee. Criteria used in evaluating the alternatives included improving traffic flow; minimizing impacts to businesses, and ease of trail integration. A public involvement component was not a part of the study, but 50 surveys were sent out to businesses along the study corridor. The MPO received 18 surveys back in which business owners agreed there was a problem, but emphasized the need to maintain access to their businesses.

There are nine alternatives, four of which are recommended for further study. The first alternative is the no-build with the routing of the trail through the area. Each alternative was evaluated from a pedestrian perspective and therefore included tunnels to provide safe pedestrian crossings. The second alternative would grade-separate Lawndale Drive from Battleground Avenue, which would eliminate conflict points. The alternative does require further travel to go from Lawndale Drive south on Battleground. The alternatives also add additional lanes to address future traffic growth. The third alternative is known as the elongated traffic circle, which Traffic Engineering worked closely with MPO staff to develop. Traffic Engineering particularly worked to develop a design at each end of the circle to minimize delay at the points of entry and exiting. In this alternative the trail would be routed through the center and would primarily be above-ground. The last alternative includes an extensive bridge grade-separating Battleground Avenue. The bridge would extend from just north of the Battleground / Lawndale intersection and tie back in at Green Valley Road. The elimination of the five alternatives was due to their impacts on businesses along the corridor.

Next steps include looking further at alternatives for detail analysis, extending the study limits further south to the Wendover Avenue Interchange, and including a public involvement component. The improvements will very likely be phased, with the trail being implemented first.

Keith Holliday inquired if the rail right-of-way had been abandoned by Norfolk Southern. Tyler Meyer responded that rail operations have stopped south of Green Valley along this segment of rail line, but the rail line has not been formally abandoned through the regulatory process by Norfolk Southern.

## **5. Project Updates**

Lydia McIntyre advised of an update on the R-4707 project (US 29/Reedy Fork Parkway Interchange upgrade). The MPO is developing the environmental document with oversight from NCDOT. Tasks 1-4 have been completed and NCDOT recently approved Task 5. Task 5 is the purpose and needs statement, which explains why the project is needed. The purpose of the project is to upgrade the facility to meet future growth from the Reedy Fork Development and to accommodate the future I-785. The project will be going before the Merger Team on September 21<sup>st</sup> and will be looking to get agreement on concurrence points 1 (purpose and need) and 2 (alternatives carried forward). Five alternatives were evaluated, but only two are being recommended to be carried forward. The diamond interchange and tight partial cloverleaf interchange were deleted as a result of impacts to streams and wetlands. The two alternatives recommended to be carried forward include the Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI) and the partial cloverleaf interchange. The interchanges have been moved further southward to allow adequate spacing with the proposed interchange at Brown Summit.

MPO staff is planning to hold a Stakeholder / Local Officials meeting prior to the public informational meeting tentatively set for September 14<sup>th</sup>.

## **6. MPO Strategic Reports**

Tyler Meyer introduced Peter Ohlms to the TAC.

Tyler Meyer advised that NCDOT will release the Draft TIP on September 7<sup>th</sup>. The overall process will probably be completed in December 2007. MPO staff will bring an update on the Draft TIP at the next meeting. MPO staff will prepare materials for public review and hold public meetings.

Tyler Meyer advised that the Collector Plan would be taken before the County Commissioners on the day following the TAC meeting.

Tyler Meyer advised that the September 27<sup>th</sup> and October 18<sup>th</sup> meetings are being cancelled and a new meeting date is proposed for October 11<sup>th</sup>. MPO meetings are planned for November 15<sup>th</sup> and December 20<sup>th</sup> as well. The December date may be rescheduled or cancelled.

## **Other Items**

### **1. Board Member Report**

Doug Galyon advised the draft TIP will be released at the September Board meeting and is fairly optimistic that funding will be restored to the outer loop. Galyon emphasized the importance of continuing to push for loop money since the Highway Trust Fund is running out of money. The Final TIP is expected to come out in June of 2007. As a result of cash flow problems, five- or six-month construction

delays are occurring. Galyon noted all states across the U.S. are in the same situation. The future for North Carolina will include toll roads to construct new roads, and local municipalities will also need to generate revenues to support state funds.

Keith Holliday inquired about the securing of funding for the outer loop from US 29 to US 70. Galyon is optimistic that this portion of the loop will be funded in this TIP. Holliday noted the next step would be to secure funding for the segment from Bryan Boulevard to Battleground Avenue based on general discussions. Galyon is looking at the possibility of using GARVEE Bonds because Division 7 has \$81 million in GARVEE Bonds available. The cost for the segment is approximately \$90 million, but Galyon wants to make sure the interest payback would not be taken out of the equity formula, but paid for out of the Highway Trust Fund. Galyon is also looking at doing a design-build to construct the segment from Bryan Boulevard to Battleground Avenue.

John Hunsinger handed out a NCDOT project update list for the Greensboro Urban Area. Hunsinger noted it includes not only TIP projects, but also projects funded by other sources. The list includes projects on the 12-month letting list and will be provided at future MPO meetings.

## **2. Regional Transportation News**

Brent McKinney advised that a new service departing from the Galyon Depot at 5 am will start on August 24<sup>th</sup> going to Boone. The route will include a stop at Wilkesboro Community College and turn around in Boone.

A meeting was held last week on the Seamless Transportation Study to measure interest. McKinney noted a good representation of the various agencies and all parties present agreed to further evaluate the initiative.

McKinney also noted that the service to Mount Airy is having very high ridership, resulting in a need to send a 2<sup>nd</sup> vehicle. McKinney expressed interest to evaluate the long term impact of widening a facility versus using a portion of the funds to expand transit services.

## **3. Wrap-Up**

The TAC was adjourned at 4:00 pm.